
**R.I. Bays, Rivers & Watersheds Coordination Team
Public Advisory Committee
*Minutes – November 15, 2005***

Members attending: Jack Schempp (ECRI); Stephen Medeiros (RISAA); Jenny Pereira Woonasquatucket Watershed Council; Jane Austin (Save the Bay); Lawrence Taft (Audubon); David Zoglio; Jen McCann (CRC); Robert Billington and Veronica Cadoppi (Blackstone Valley Tourism Council); and Ken Kubic (RIMTA). Chaired by Chip Young, URI Coastal Institute. Also attending: Sandra Whitehouse (House Policy Office) and Kelly Mahoney (Senate Policy Office).

I. After introductions, Chip Young gave a brief overview of the work done to date and current status of the Coordination Team. The main challenge continues to be the lack of an official chair or staff. Meanwhile, PAC, Science Advisory Committee, Economic Monitoring Collaborative and Environmental Monitoring Collaboratives have continued to meet and move forward with their charged tasks. This included a quick review of the work by the Environmental Monitoring Collaborative, stating they were continuing to prioritize issue areas.

II. Jennifer McCann gave an overview of the Metro Bay Special Area Management Plan on which she is working in collaboration with the Coastal Resources Management Council, and referred PAC members to the PowerPoint presentation she was working from which is on the Metro Bay SAMP site. She described the SAMP as a “tool with teeth,” and the Metro Bay group was trying to support what communities are already working on.

FEMA has called the Metro Bay (Upper Bay around Providence) the ‘Achilles heel’ of the region. This issue would be addressed at an 11/22 meeting of the SAMP that would focus on Hazard Mitigation.

Questions touched upon whether the SAMP model would include rivers – (No, strictly coastal, using some GIS modeling.)

Were they looking at the bog picture? (Yes, trying to work with the municipalities and employing vision documents like Land Use 2025.)

Jen mentioned that a CRC consultant, Numi Mitchell was already working to identify good spots for redevelopment using previous maps and doing on-the-ground, on-site work to re-evaluate each spot and/or identify new ones where new development would fit.

It was pointed out that for the SAMP to work properly, it must have legislative support, which would mean the need for performance measures and indicators to ensure implementation and proper oversight by General Assembly. If the SAMPs become a part of the future plan for the state, that will make it easier to analyze effectiveness.

III. Discussion about the Marine Resources Development Plan, which had previously been distributed among PAC members took place. These were consolidated and are reflected in the following report to the Coastal Resources Management Council submitted on November 21, as well as distributed to the Coordination Team, just before the deadline for public comment. It was noted that there would be a final hearing on the MRDP on December 13, when it could either be approved with comments from public included, or put off for further review of the revisions. It was noted that the MRDP did have to be reviewed in the light of community-wide plans for the affected areas.

COMMENTS ON MARINE RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Submitted by RI Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team

Public Advisory Committee

NOVEMBER 21, 2005

The comments on the Marine Resources Development Plan (MRDP) by the Public Advisory Committee (PAC) below are a compilation of the input received at the beginning of the response process through the most recent presentation at the PAC meeting of November 15, 2005. They are submitted not as criticisms, but in an effort to improve what we appreciate is a difficult task. We respect all the hard work which has gone into the creation of this draft document, and look upon it as a potential asset to the future planning for and management of the Rhode Island marine ecosystem.

Comments

Overall tone: The document, despite references to certain collaborations and partnerships, seems to present the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) as almost omnipotent in what it oversees and what it will do in the future as it leads the MRDP. The tone is one which suggests CRMC is the lead agency in the majority of endeavors in what will necessarily have to be an equally shared and integrated effort, particularly through its collaborative role of creating a systems-level plan via the Coordination Team (CT).

In particular of note was:

On page four of the MRDP, in the first paragraph, it cites the lack of integration among “four key actors”: the Department of Environmental Management (DEM), CRMC, the Department of Administration (DOA) and the Economic Development Corporation (EDC). In the interest of being in step with the planning of the Coordination Team, it is suggested that that list be expanded to include the other CT members: RI Rivers Council, the Water Resources Board (WRB) and the Narragansett Bay Commission (NBC).

Monitoring: The MRDP draft also gives the impression that CRMC will be doing a variety of monitoring efforts that are already underway. This overlooks the ongoing efforts by a variety of agencies statewide, from DEM to URI to the Bay Window cooperative effort, and suggests massive duplication of effort. In addition, the suggestion that CRMC will take on this monitoring far exceeds any visible capacity the agency may have to do so and is in that way misleading. There is also a need to explicitly mention the inevitable need for future links to the

CT's Environmental and Economic Monitoring Collaboratives, which can help inform the MRDP work.

Outreach, Transparency and Education: Concerns were expressed about the lack of any explicit references to plans for a communications strategy to inform decisionmakers and build public support through outreach efforts to increase public awareness and involvement. There was also only a passing note in regard to transparency, and how it may be achieved. Neither of these have been CRMC strong points in the past, and should be a focus as the MRDP moves ahead. As a corollary, it was suggested that trying to make the work and concepts part of both formal and informal education efforts in Rhode Island would pay dividends, increase understanding and beginning building a foundation of informed citizens in the future. An obvious gap was in not mentioning the use of technology (e.g., Web sites, LISTSERVs) to make any and all data and plans easily accessible to the public.

Watershed Approach: There still appears to be room to expand to address watershed impacts on MRDP activities, and vice versa, although it is obvious that more focus on that area has been included since earlier drafts.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Chip Young, Chair